

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Rebecca Mahoe Kauila Benenua

"Yeah, [in Keōmuku] we had to go pick wood for cook, eh, we get no more oil stove. You get wood stove. We cook with wood. Come home. Sometime we go pick wood and we come home, we eat dinner, we like go play, eh. We take off down the beach, we go swimming with this Gay [family]. Gay girls always come help us pick kiawe wood so we can go swimming."

Tūtū Mahoe was born April 28, 1906 in Keōmuku. Her father, James Kauila, was employed as a cowboy, cook, and tender of the pigs by ranch manager Charles Gay. After Gay left the ranch in 1910 and eventually moved to Lālākoa, James Kauila followed him to help plow the fields in nearby Nininiwai. There, Gay grew corn, sweet potatoes, and pineapples. James Kauila lived in a cottage near Gay's Lālākoa home during the week. On weekends, he returned to his home in Keomuku.

Mahoe attended Keōmuku School. After completing the fifth grade, she moved up to Lālākoa to live with her older sister, Lucy, who worked for Charles Gay's oldest daughter, Amelia Dickson. Amelia Dickson lived in the Lālākoa house while her father and siblings lived in Keomuku. Mahoe helped her father in Gay's pineapple fields. Her primary job was selecting and picking slips (planting material) from the pineapple plants.

Between 1921 and 1925, Mahoe lived in Honolulu. Upon returning, she married Rustico Benenua, an immigrant from the Philippines, who worked for Hawaiian Pineapple Company.

Now a resident of Lāna'i City, Mahoe spends much of her time weaving lau hala.

Tape No. 16-22-1-88
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Rebecca Mahoe Kauila Benenua (RB)

December 4, 1988

Lāna'i City, Lāna'i

BY: Mina Morita (MM)

MM: This is an interview with Rebecca Benenua at Lāna'i City, Lāna'i on Sunday, December 4, 1988.

Okay, Aunty, let's start with your full name.

RB: My full name is Rebecca Mahoe Kauila.

MM: Kauila is the maiden . . .

RB: Maiden name.

MM: Benenua.

RB: No, that's the married one.

MM: Rebecca Mahoe Kauila Benenua.

RB: Benenua.

MM: Okay. And when were you born?

RB: April 28, 1906.

MM: Where?

RB: Keōmuku.

MM: Okay. Right in Keōmuku town?

RB: Yeah, Keōmuku town.

MM: Okay. And what was your mother's name?

RB: My mother's name is Lucy [Apiki] Kauila.

MM: Okay. And what was her middle name? You mentioned it to me one time.

RB: (Piikula).

MM: Okay. And your father's name?

RB: My father's name is James Kauila.

MM: Okay. And let's see. Tell me how many brothers and sisters did you have?

RB: Oh, plenty, but only get two left, you know, and we grew up only two. All the rest died.

MM: Yeah. But, let's see. You were number three?

RB: No. I think I was. . . . Had some. [Lucy, RB's sister] was twenty-two years old when she died [in 1919].

MM: Oh, so you had older . . .

RB: Older ones. Had one going to Maunaolu Seminary [on Maui]. That's where they were going school with Mrs. Butler, my aunty. Then when she got sick, she came home. Then not too long, she died. She was buried in Keomuku. Her name is Lucy, too--my mother's name. Lucy Kauila.

MM: Give me the names of your brothers and sisters from the oldest to the youngest.

RB: The oldest [boy] is Betty's father.

MM: Oh. That's Robert?

RB: Abraham.

MM: Oh, Abraham.

RB: Robert is the baby.

MM: Okay. But had Abraham.

RB: Abraham. Me, and Clarence mother.

MM: That's [Eliza] Manoa?

RB: Manoa. And Hannah [Richardson].

MM: Aunty Hannah and then . . .

RB: Uncle Robert. Robert had twins.

MM: Oh, I didn't know that.

RB: Had two boys.

MM: Okay. And his twin died?

RB: Yeah, the first one live and the second died. But he live one year something. And then I'm one twin, first set, yeah.

MM: Yeah.

RB: Two girls. I was sick, my mother take care me. Then the other one, my grandmother take care. And then, she got sick and she died. And she died in the house down there at the beach [Keōmuku side] where we go every time.

MM: I see.

RB: That place.

MM: How old was she when she died?

RB: She was thirteen months old.

MM: I see.

RB: She not even talking, well, talk little bit, but not too much, yeah.

MM: Yeah.

RB: But she was sickly.

MM: So, where did you go to school?

RB: Keōmuku.

MM: Oh, and who . . .

RB: My teacher is Mary Kauila.

MM: And she was Mary Fitzsimmons at the time?

RB: She married plenty times, you know. (MM chuckles.) She married that Donlin. This man, he used to work on the Mikahala, a boat [inter-island steamer]. And she married him. [Then] she divorce him. Then she married Fitzsimmons. And then from there, that one died. And then she got married to my brother [Abraham] until she died.

MM: All the time you were going to school at Keōmuku, was she the only teacher down there?

RB: Yeah, only one teacher for the whole [school]. Was, I think, forty of us, or fifty.

MM: That big?

RB: Yeah. Nishimura was, that family. And Tamura.

MM: Tamura?

RB: [Ichiro] Tamura. You know the honey man.

MM: Oh, "Murata"?

RB: "Murata." Well, that's their name. Tamura. [Ichiro Tamura was known as Murata.] Then his children. And then Auntie Maggie them.

MM: Kauwenaole?

RB: Kauwenaole but she never marry that time. [Her maiden name was Nakihei.] The mother was, the mother and another cousin. But she's living Honolulu, eh. So they stay bumbai.

MM: Oh, so Auntie Maggie, not your time? Her mother.

RB: No, her auntie.

MM: Her auntie.

RB: Her auntie was our time. Maggie was small.

MM: Yeah. What was her auntie's name?

RB: Ah, Julia Kekino.

MM: Julia . . .

RB: Kekino.

MM: Kekino.

RB: But she died, though. She lived down Sand Island [in Honolulu].

MM: I see.

RB: With her real mother. But you know, Maggie's father [John Nakihei] was taking care of her, you know. Just like hanai, eh? Just like you. Then they try for change her name, eh. They no like. I said never mind if she stay with us. Your name all right. But when she grew older, she had to go school somewhere else. Over here [Lana'i], only [up to] sixth grade. So she went Honolulu. I don't know how long she went school. Maybe she went to work. And she married her husband. Her husband name is Yokeman. But, she divorce him and came over here. She marry one man from Kaua'i. The man is Lalawai.

MM: Oh yeah. That Jimmy.

RB: You know. You heard that name, eh.

MM: Yeah. See, all these names I hear before. Yeah.

RB: Well, now they die. He die away, too, eh. So that one she married and get plenty kids. One, Kumulani used to take care. That's one family from Kaua'i. Family to the Gays. Violet [Gay] them is Hawaiian, you know. They get plenty Hawaiian family, too. They all know this--their family. But after we stay with them . . .

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

MM: So when you were in kindergarten, when you first went to [Keōmuku] School, had about forty, fifty children?

RB: Well, because all different classes, eh, different grades. So she teach. Abraham [RB's older brother], Julia Kekino, that one was all in the same [grade]. And the Tutu Mama's [Hattie Kaopuiki] boys, and then get one more family. The brother, Tutu Papa's [Daniel Kaopuiki, Sr.] brother [Noa Kaopuiki], get children was living Ka'a. And then, all them. One side is them and the other side is Tutu Papa's place. That's the one where Sol [Kaopuiki] get now.

MM: So where--okay. The school was right in Keōmuku?

RB: Yeah, right next to that [Charles] Gay's place, where Mama's [Rebecca Richardson's] new yard. Right next to that place.

MM: Okay. So that's kind of like across from the [Ka Lanakila O Ka Mālamalama] Church then, huh?

RB: No, no. It was far from the church. The church way down. You know where the Tutu Mama [Hattie Kaopuiki] them used to stay before?

MM: Oh, long time. (Chuckles) I don't remember.

RB: Well, the houses now broken down. You know right down by one ditch, eh, so but, the houses Gay own, they bought the house. These two brothers bought that place.

MM: So, the school was by Tutu Papa them old house, near there?

RB: Yeah, old house way down Ka'a. But you know the first house they live, down the landing.

MM: Yeah, Kahalepalaoa [Landing]?

RB: Yeah. That wharf there, get [a] well. That's where they used. Some of them wen give birth in there. I don't know who, but.

MM: I know Mama [Rebecca Richardson] was born over there.

RB: Yeah. All them was born that place. The whole Kaopuiki family stay. So afterwards, then we moved back to Keomuku. And then the old man, the father, Tutu Papa's father moved Ka'a. So he sold his

place. Then the mother wen give for Sol. That's why Sol them stay in there. They no can cut him out, eh, because it was given already. Then come this Kahaleanu family. They live right next. The land is near the shoreline. The water go in there, you know, and they used to go in the water, go down next side, you know.

MM: That Kahaleanu?

RB: Kahea.

MM: That's--but that's where the Club Lāna'i is now, huh?

RB: No, no.

MM: No?

RB: No. The Club Lāna'i, that one belong to somebody else, but they gave 'em to the Kahaleanu.

MM: Oh, I see.

RB: But that place, Gay gave to this family. So they shut him out from over here, he [Gay] no can transfer his pineapple to Maui. Have to be to Hawaiian Pine. That's why he wen quit here. If you quit here, you sell everything you own. That's the only place he never sell because he wen put those people over there, eh. So he never sell 'em. Only the ones that he sold the house, to Tutu Papa them. That's why they had that house. And then, you know da kine old stove with the chimney, I think the chimney puka inside the ceiling, eh. That's why wen burn down. Oh, big house, you know, that one. Right around, get the lanai. Then too, my father [James Kauila] used to work there. He used to be cook, any kind job.

MM: This is for the Gay family?

RB: Yeah.

MM: And then, how did your father learn how for be cowboy?

RB: Any kind job, he can make. Poi, boil da kine palaoa poi. Mix 'em, pound, and he make. I still have the poi pounder, but I don't have the board. [Ernest] Vredenburg wen take 'em.

MM: So how--your father could make any kind job he did?

RB: Yeah. He go cowboy like that. When he came work for [George] Munro, that's when he went cowboy. But he work for Charles Gay, he used to be any kind, keep pig, go help plant something, help plant pineapple. He was the first man plant pineapple here, the Gays. We all go trim.

MM: So, before the Gays came, what kind job did your father do?

RB: Well, he came same time, he work for them. Before that, fisherman. My father was fisherman. But when they [Gays] came [to Lāna'i in 1902], they took him to work for them.

MM: Did your mother work too?

RB: No. My mother raise kids.

(Laughter)

RB: My mother, every time get children. If all live, I think, we get seventeen children. So, only five live. We grew up only five.

MM: So when you was small and you go to school in the morning . . .

RB: Then we go home.

MM: . . . and then pau school, you folks go home.

RB: Go home, go . . .

MM: You had job for do?

RB: Yeah, we had to go pick wood for cook, eh, we get no more oil stove. You get wood stove. We cook with wood. Come home. Sometime we go pick wood and we come home, we eat dinner, we like go play, eh. We take off down the beach, we go swimming with this Gay [family]. Gay girls always come help us pick kiawe wood so we can go swimming. (MM chuckles.) Because I think, I think Violet and I same age. Eighty-two.

MM: I think Violet little bit more old. I think Violet eighty-three. [Violet Gay was born March 8, 1904.]

RB: Eighty-three?

MM: I think so.

RB: Well, I don't know. I'm eighty-two. I be eighty-three next year. Well, never mind the age. (MM chuckles.) But they was all together, these girls. But they [Gays] get separate teaching, you know, them. When our school pau, then Betty's mother [Mary Kauila] come to their house teach them until they ready to go Punahou School.

MM: Yeah. So they didn't go to school with you folks then?

RB: Never come with us. They stay themselves. As soon pau, they all gather at the porch, eh. She just go walk up. We had class, she pau. Then she go home. Because near the school, from where she teach.

MM: You know, in the schoolhouse, everybody stay in one room?

RB: One big room. Big one. Almost like the room that you folks used to stay up [referring to the Forbes house]. That's a parlor like that big, you know.

MM: Big parlor.

RB: But I think, little bit more long.

MM: Only one room?

RB: Only one room for all us. The first, second, third, go until the sixth.

MM: Oh, each grade in each row?

RB: Yeah, well, the first row, that's the young ones. She start from the young ones then come to the older ones. When they come to the fifth grade, that's where more hard, eh. Some of us don't know how what and what's, so she work on us. Then my brother pau, he went Lahainaluna School. And then when he come back, then he . . .

MM: That's Abraham?

RB: Yeah, the one policeman. Then he work policeman, then he marry her. He marry his own teacher.

MM: I see.

RB: But that's all right. So then, I was Honolulu that time. I came back, they already married long time.

MM: So when you folks, okay--let's go back, talk about school. What kind stuff did you learn? What kind lessons did you have?

RB: Lessons? Oh, arithmetic, all that kind. Was the easy kind. Then bumbai, I got sick. I cannot go school and I had to stay home. My father gotta bring me on the back to school. Till they say, "If she cannot come school, don't have to bring." Only trouble, he gotta leave his job, take me go school. Bumbai if I get tired, ah, he gotta bring me home. But Charlie Gay [Kauila's boss] no mind. Charlie Gay said, "No that's all right."

MM: Where did you folks get your books from? The books, and the paper, and the pencil?

RB: From Maui. She ordered the books and the books come. And then we have to pay for the books.

MM: I see.

RB: Not free. Then the scratch kind like composition books and tablet like that, my father go buy for us. Each one of those scratch kind stuff. But the books, she ordered. Then this one pau, the next one

can use the same book. But fifth grade come more high, eh. Sixth grade then, you no can go school already. You gotta go out.

MM: Yeah, unless you go off island.

RB: Yeah. You gotta go because no more school already. Up here, no more that time.

MM: Oh, didn't . . .

RB: Didn't have school.

MM: . . . have the Kō'ele School yet.

RB: Then afterwards, they had the school up here [Kō'ele]. Then the Munro girls, the mother--the wife from the old man's and the girl that teach. The older [daughter] from Munro.

MM: The oldest girl?

RB: The older girl.

MM: That's Jean [Munro Towill]?

RB: Jean, then Ruby. But Ruby little bit younger. But these two, always together. But Georgie and the other one, always away. And the four girls and one boy. But Jean, always with the mother. Nice girls when they kids.

MM: So, when you were pau school, pau sixth grade, what did you do down Keomuku?

RB: Pau fifth grade. Until fifth grade, you get out.

MM: Oh, you went until fifth grade. Oh. So you were only ten years old when you pau school?

RB: About that time. Eleven, I think. You know, almost eleven.

MM: So what did you do when you pau school?

RB: Because I work with the pineapple, eh, for money for go [Honolulu]. As soon as I pau, they open school over there. But I never go school. I wen go work.

MM: But, between eleven years old [when RB finished school] and fifteen [when RB went to Honolulu], what kind work did you do?

RB: Only the pineapple, trim pineapple for Charles Gay.

MM: Trim pineapple.

RB: All us. My sister, myself and all the ones that work up here.

MM: So you live down Keōmuku and then you come up this side?

RB: No, no. My father was working for Charles Gay, he stay up here.

MM: Oh. So you folks were already at Kō'e'e?

RB: No, not Kō'e'e, Ka Lālākoa.

MM: Oh. I didn't know you live Lālākoa.

RB: Yeah. That's where my father worked [during the week]. And he drive the Caterpillar for Charles Gay. And his girls help him drive this Caterpillar for him. And he push the rubbish over. Make good for plant the pineapple. Those girls, they work with my father.

MM: So where was the house you folks stayed in at Lālākoa?

RB: They had, what you call, plantation kind, yeah. Right outside of the big house [i.e., Charles Gay's home]. But when they [Gay's children] went out [i.e., left Lāna'i], they never like come back here, you know. But I think Lawrence Gay was the first one came home. Because he married [Mary Helen] Lindsey in Maui.

MM: Mm hmm. Lindsey.

RB: So he come [back]. But boys, they no care too much. Girls, they feel sad because they live here. So they never come. Just lately, Venus [Gay Holt] came here. Venus came here with the daughter first. Then Sol call me. "You know, you remember Venus?"

I said, "Yeah."

He tell, "Well, you know her name?"

"Yeah, Mrs. Holt."

So they made potluck at the senior center. Everybody came. Then the second time, she came with [sister] Violet [Gay]. "Oh my, look at Violet, still the same, yeah."

"And you, too."

"Yeah, but I getting old."

"And so with me."

Oh, we sit down talk.

MM: What you mean you folks trim the pineapple when you work? Just pick 'em?

RB: You know, pulapula.

MM: Oh, pull plant [i.e., slips].

RB: You know, pull plant. You trim the bottom and then you turn on the side, eh. So many thousand you make, you get so much [pay]. Oh, you know, get one man, when we trim, we go home pau work, eh. We go, we walk, ranch, yeah. And the guy, he stay inside there, he check. He take so much from each one, pulapula, to make his thousand. Eh, when we go, our count is no. He tell, "You folks never make enough pulapula for the pineapple." He tell what we come out, everyone get. But him, he cheat. He wen take 'em away, put in his pile. He get plenty. He get so many thousand. He was getting more than us. Bumbai we go sneak, we stay inside the cornfield. The cornfield near. We go, we come back. We see him taking off.

(Interview interrupted. Taping stops, then resumes.)

MM: Okay. You were just saying that when you were a young girl, you were sick.

RB: Yeah. What, about eight, I think, or nine.

MM: But you didn't know what kind sick you had?

RB: No. But Charles Gay used to be our doctor, you know.

MM: Oh. He used to come and doctor you?

RB: Yeah, but he is not a doctor. He tried to help people. He said, make this kind milk. The malt milk. She mix 'em up, everything, put all in the jar. And he said if no more ice, put 'em inside the well, you know.

MM: Yeah.

RB: And you put something that can hold the bottle inside. You let 'em go inside there. When they like drink, you pick 'em up one bottle. So just like in the ice, you know. Oh, that's not a bad idea, that's why everybody throw the watermelon inside there.

MM: For keep 'em cold?

RB: Yeah, to keep 'em cold. We go school, we raise watermelon. You know his place Hauola, you hear that place, well, that's where he used the land up there. That's Abraham, Betty's mother [Mary Kauila] place. So we stay up there. Was free, eh. My grandfather plant watermelon and cantaloupe. And that's all he plant there for us.

MM: Was the watermelon and cantaloupe only for you folks eat?

RB: No, for sell. Make money.

MM: So you folks sell on Lāna'i or sell Lahaina?

RB: Take Maui. Yeah, Lahaina. She plant, we come home, pau school. We clean and water, you know. They no water like before. But take it drop by drop because hardly [rained]. But when they plant that, it's rainy weather. When rain, ho, the watermelon big, long kind, yeah.

MM: Sweet?

RB: Sweet. And everybody go draw our name on top it when the thing small. When big, stretch, the name big eh. Long kind, you know. And then we used to haul down the beach. If today he going send Maui, we haul 'em down the beach with him. No more school. So we take it down the beach, put on the small skiff. He take 'em Keomuku, then the one who get boat, that's the one take 'em for him. And he go with them. And he pay the boat for gas, or something.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

RB: . . . he buy kaukau for us then come home. He come home on the boat with them, with the grocery. And he say, "No can buy candy for you folks. Candy no good." You buy food, canned goods, you know. But, he said, "Never mind. Bumbai make candy, I tell Tutu." My grandmother make candy with sugar, you know. Then us, more smart than her, we can make, you know.

MM: So what kind candy is that, she make?

RB: Sugar candy.

MM: How did she make it?

RB: You melt with the butter.

MM: Sugar and butter?

RB: Butter. So taste just like caramel. Hard. Then we cut 'em in pieces, eh, put inside the jar. When we like, they give us ration. You get one, everybody one. Pau. Then next day like that. And then we no crave for everything. We go down, catch crab for eat. But my two old folks, they go fishing, come home, we get bags of fishes.

MM: Yeah. What kind fish they catch?

RB: Moi, or mullet. But now, no more too much. The Filipinos, they just hoard the fish, yeah. You know, they open all those nets, the long net. That's not nice, yeah. They make from one end to the other. And I said, gee boy, they greedy. And usually midnight, they slapping the fish with the ti leaf. You no more fish. Now you go, the fish scared, I think.

MM: But you folks used to catch crab?

RB: Catch crab, 'ōpae.

MM: Plenty 'ōpae, too.

RB: Now no more too much. Because the Filipino--even da kine, 'alamihi. They just--small kind just born.

MM: They eat 'em?

RB: Yeah, they catch 'em.

MM: Okay. When Charles Gay used to take care of the sick people, if he couldn't take care, what did he used to do?

RB: The thing that he take care, he make 'em all right. Most is babies. The big people hardly get sick. The small ones, they get sick, maybe they get the runs. They get fever high. He put 'em in the water, cool water, because no more ice, eh. So he put cold water. Us was--me and my other twin, put us two inside the cold water, and my mother, she no like, she think cold. But he said no. He tell you stay outside and he do 'em.

MM: And he took care the babies?

RB: Yeah. He made milk for them, he give my father for bring home. They feed this babies with this milk. You no need get mother kind milk. They used to get condensed milk, eh. But this malt milk. Oh, us, we drink. Then that only our milk was. That's why this grandmother, just like our family, you know the Gay.

MM: Yeah. What about his wife? His wife come help him?

RB: Yeah, his wife [Louisa Gay], more Hawaiian. But she dress up, you know, that old lady. She come, pass by or go church, she pass by the road, talk to us. Talk to my mother them. Bumbai, you go pass that church, that all Uncle Noa stay, Tutu Papa them, they stay by, sit down, she talk. Climb by the gate, talk to them. Then they walk to church. And after we go that church, we no go this church, eh.

MM: You folks used to go . . .

RB: Charles Gay church [Lāna'ihale Church]. We go that church because they get Bible class. They get [flash] card, you know the picture of the--they ask question, you answer them. But they would take the card away. You study the answer and then--Betty's mother [Mary Kauila] used to teach.

MM: Sunday school at that church.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MM: Okay. At Charlie Gay's church, who used to go to that church?

RB: Him and his family.

MM: Only him and his family.

RB: And the one who work for him.

MM: Yeah. So was your father--who else work for him?

RB: No, my father go to--because he [lay] minister, he go this church.

MM: Oh, so your father went to the other Keōmuku church?

RB: Yeah, Keōmuku. The old one, way down.

MM: That name was . . .

RB: Ka Lanakila O Ka Mālamalama.

MM: Ka Lanakila O Ka Mālamalama. And Charlie Gay's church name was?

RB: Lāna'ihale.

MM: Lāna'ihale Church.

RB: Because him, that's Kalawina. It's a Protestant church, him. And then Tūtū them, that's a different church, eh.

MM: So Charlie Gay's church was only Charlie Gay's family?

RB: No, everybody. The Kahaleanu family was, and had another people, Koon his name.

MM: Koon?

RB: Yeah. Him and his wife come to church. Then us four kids for Sunday school. We go because, well, the other church no more Sunday school. And then our teacher, Betty's mother [Mary Kauila], she's the one teach us Sunday school, you know. And you know sometimes we sneak, eh, we no say nothing. Bumbai the other one going say, "She never answer up."

I tell, "You think I don't know how to answer." Well, I no like answer that kind because sometimes you mistake, eh, you wrong, and they tell you, you study some more. That's just like going to school. But nice, though, like that. But we go only because get [flash] card, yeah. You get to pick a card and then the other side the question and answer, eh. So we like pile up all the cards. Nice, but that's cheating, yeah.

MM: (Chuckles) And then so, church--the other church, Ka Lanakila O Ka Mālamalama, that's . . .

RB: Tūtū Papa [Daniel Kaopuiki, Sr.] them church.

MM: But your father was the minister. Who was the minister before him?

RB: Only them I know. Him and the two of Tūtū Papa's brothers, Andrew and who the other one? Kama, I think. I forget his name. I had the picture of them three minister. They were young that time. My father was young. All, they get the black coat, eh. Nice. So I made one picture for my father. But you know over here, this place the termite eat, the frame all broke, eh. So I don't know what Aunty Hannah [Richardson, RB's sister] them do, throw away, I think.

MM: Oh, maybe she still get. I go ask her.

RB: But I have one stay my house. I made a small one. But that one, was big one I make. I think more better I give them. Then I keep the small for me. I still have mine.

MM: If you want me make a copy, I can.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

RB: [Talking about UH Hawaiian language professor Larry Kimura and his research on Lāna'i place names.] No, I think Kimura.

MM: Oh, Larry Kimura.

RB: Yeah. That's the first time he come here and I went over there, I [first] thought he was an old man, you know. I saw this boy come. I said, "Come, come." He talk Hawaiian. Elaine come get me. "Eh, Elaine, that's one young man, that."

"Yeah, that's the one they going talk to."

Eh, bumbai, I see him again, he came one time, we talking [about] the Hawai'i people, he talk about Charlie Gay. Eh, real Hawaiian, no, how he talk, yeah. Oh, I like the way he talk. And the face no look Hawaiian.

MM: Yeah. Is that the time he ask you how for pronounce certain place?

RB: Place. And you know, if you make mistake, he correct you. That's not the way to pronounce it--this word or whatever. Well, some people, they think they smart, yeah. Oh, Elaine, she no can. You know someplace, they no can read Hawaiian.

MM: Well, you know like Keōmuku, is it "Keamuku," "Keōmoku," or what?

RB: Keōmuku.

MM: Keōmuku. When you folks . . .

RB: That's why you see the writing is Keōmuku, no more "Keōmoku."

MM: But when you folks were growing up, what you folks called the place, Keomuku?

RB: Yeah, Keōmuku. But you know, we small time, "Oh, down Keōmuku," they no understand where come Keōmuku, Keōmuku or what. But they all say Keōmuku.

MM: K-E-O-M-U-K-U?

RB: K-U. That's the right way to pronounce. That's why you on the phone, get that. "Muku," not "moku." But that's why we used to go school, we say down "Keomoku." So you think so then, the sound no right, eh. But never mind, they know where that is.

MM: Yeah. (Chuckles) You folks knew what you were talking about so . . .

RB: But the people that don't know, they said, "Where is that place?" They say different name and they pronounce different. Oh, makes no difference, "Keōmuku," "Keōmoku" same. Sound the same, eh.

MM: Anyway, us go back, let's talk about you when you was small. After you folks move from Keōmuku and you came up Lālakoa, how old were you about?

RB: About nine.

MM: Nine years old.

RB: I was young yet.

MM: And then how long you folks live Lālakoa?

RB: Oh, we live long time, until they wen go away [in the 1920s].

MM: Until the Gays left?

RB: But I was--I went Honolulu. Then I work till I got married [in 1925]. But my father still work for him.

MM: Yeah. So when you folks trim the pulapula, that's the only job you folks used to do?

RB: Yeah, for Charles Gay. He is the first one plant pineapple over here [Lāna'i]. But his pineapple no go to Dole. Afterward Dole started make pineapple, too. So his [Gay's] pineapple goes to [David T.] Fleming [of Haiku Fruit and Packing Company]. Maui.

MM: You folks never used to pick or anything, you folks?

RB: Well, [by] that time, I went away. I never pick. But they had somebody pick. My father help them because he work for them, eh. Then bumbai afterwards, he pau, he work with Munro.

MM: So how long did you folks plant?

RB: I don't know how long they wen plant. When they tell me make the pulapula, we never plant. My father them wen plant.

MM: Where you folks get the pulapula from?

RB: From Maui. From Fleming. That's why he [Gay] give his pineapple to them. But Hawaiian Pine came in [in 1922] so he wen give 'em. That's why they had to sell their house. They no can get nothing for send out. No more place for them send 'em. The car no can go down the boat place, take the pineapple. They used to send it. That's why, you know one car they wen send from here to Honolulu, they used to park down Manele, you saw that truck, eh.

MM: Yeah, the old one.

RB: That one stay Honolulu now.

MM: For fix up, yeah.

RB: Yeah. But they like antique, I think.

MM: Yeah. But that's the one they used to pull the pineapples?

RB: Yeah, pull. And my father is the first one wen drive that truck and yet he no more license. (Chuckles) At that time, no more policeman over here for give license. He can drive till one time, the boys, they fool around the car and my father was in front the car. The two kids wen start the car. Albert [Gay], Violet them younger brother, the last in the house, him and the nephew, the sister's boy, Cecil. The two was on top. They was big already. They start, oh, the car wen run, my father was in the front. Oh, the car wen go, my father fall down on the ground. When he turn around, he look the wheel coming up, and that wheel all get spikes, eh, he just wen move one time, the wheel pass. Oh, he thought he would be smashed. Then the father scold these two boys. And he come home, "How come your boys run the car like that? You folks never see Kauila over there?"

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MM: What kind limu you folks--when you were small did you folks used to pick limu down?

RB: Yeah, limu, that kind black one, green one. But that one is good limu too. Now no more. Now, start grow, quick, no more. Auntie Hannah, she went down and just when they, she cut 'em with the scissors, so no get that, the one on the stone out there, bumbai no

more eh.

MM: No, no grow.

RB: So she cut 'em all, and she clean, she had one small bowl, she took 'em for Puanani them. She always take things for them and those kids always get good kind things. They take crab. Like clam, crab, yeah.

MM: So when you folks small, plenty crab, too?

RB: Yeah. More plenty than now. Now, they run the car on top there, they make the road [i.e., sand] hard. The hole some hard for dig, eh. Before when you see like that, only that spot, you get plenty hole. You dig and you give up because full already, the bag. But not now. Now, you make like that, you only some get, some no, then you go on like that. But if get plenty, you get. But before, you get the running kind. When you run down the beach, they all go up, they go sleep in the sand. You only can see the eye. You just pick 'em up, wow, the bag full quick. So we go home. That's what we could live on. Some they eat raw, they make. And some, they like cook. My kids, Barbara girl, ho, she like crab. If she see the crab, she tell, "Ho, boy, crab." She come sit down, she eat, raw kind and cook kind. But not the brother. The brother, oh, he Japanese.

MM: How about 'opihi when you folks was small, had 'opihi?

RB: Yeah, plenty 'opihi, but you gotta go pali place, eh, stone, go Manele. Manele, you can go get. Now, you no can. You no can get nothing. You gotta go way out.

MM: Yeah. So when you folks were small, you folks only stay Keōmuku [side], or you folks used to go holoholo around Lana'i?

RB: Yeah, we come up here, but where we live, where we raise watermelon, we stay Hauola. And we pick up beans for the pigs, we stay Hauola.

MM: What kind beans? Kiawe beans?

RB: Kiawe beans.

MM: For the pig?

RB: For the pigs.

MM: Not the cow?

RB: No. Pigs. We pick up and then they take down that. Well, they take 'em for the cow, but they no more cow, only pigs. So they boil that with, I don't know what kind of middling or what, and they feed the pigs. My grandfather [Kauhane Apiki] go fishing. As soon we get fish, he go Maui go sell, put in the ice. Then come home. Then he raise the

watermelon, he ready for harvest. We all carry the watermelon down the beach, put on the small boat and take 'em Keōmuku. He take 'em Keōmuku and put 'em on the boat. And everybody with watermelon going on top. They take 'em all down Maui. And then come home, their grocery, they buy. We even buy water, you know, for drink.

MM: Oh, because Keōmuku no more good kind water. . .

RB: Keōmuku da kine water have salt, yeah . . .

MM: Brackish water.

RB: But other than that, everything all right. But we used to drink that kind water, that--not too bad. But someplace, yeah, salty. The place where we stay now, salty, the water. You no need salt. You put inside the pot for cook with the fish, yeah, already salt. But we no like that kind salt. We get the real kind, we cook, eh.

MM: But, okay--had everybody living Keōmuku side, had anybody living up side?

RB: Up where?

MM: Up the ranch [Kō'ele], up the . . .

RB: Yeah. All those who had cowboy, stay up the ranch. And then we keep the pigs. Then Charlie Gay, stay on his own place his time, raise banana up in the mountain. I figure get plenty banana up the . . .

MM: Behind Lālākoa?

RB: Yeah, behind, way up the gulch. One Chinese man take plant. That's how he do.

MM: Anybody live Mānele?

RB: Mānele, only--no. Before, they had warehouse down there, they used to go Mānele stay, but had boat come in, that's why they go down.

MM: Only when the boat come in?

RB: Yeah. And if they like go fishing, yeah. They use the storerooms there. Go fishing, come home. Stay in there. Only the people on the island. Us people from the ranch. My father them, they go down there.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MM: So then, oh, you just mentioned that you used to work for Mrs. [Helen Jean] Forbes, too.

RB: Yeah, for little while only.

MM: Yeah, but what did you do, work in the store?

RB: In the house, work.

MM: Oh.

RB: Not store kind. In the house because she work in the office, eh. Just take care the kids. Only little while, then I went Honolulu.

MM: How old were you when you did that?

RB: Oh, just about--that was before nine. Because you know us, when Hawaiian kids, when they young, they look old. (MM chuckles.) They so big and clumsy. I was kind of tall, but I only was eight or nine. But nine go to ten, almost the same kind length, you know.

MM: Yeah, same height. Okay, and then we started talking about when you came back.

RB: When I came back to work for pineapple, we stayed up here by Kō'e'e ranch. Inside the house next door to Aunty Hannah one before she wen move the other house. Had one house this side, they wen broke 'em down.

MM: The old houses.

RB: Yeah, when my father was staying inside there. Then when he wen go live down that house where you folks was living [i.e., Forbes house], then when he died, well--before he died, we had to get out, eh. Him, and then come the one take care the piggery. Him [Kauila] is the one that take care the pigs, but the one that cook the kaukau and feed, had one Japanese, you know. That one. Then pau, my father move up that house, where I told you next. And then they wen broke 'em down that time, everybody wen move. So, no more that house. After that house broke down, next house broke down. And one more house, Uncle Biggy [Junior Kaopuiki] them house because they wen move down the city, they broke that house. Only Mama [Rebecca Richardson] them place. Then when my brother wen move Honolulu and Tutu them wen move on the other side, then her house was broke down. My brother's house was broke down, Robert. Then, my older brother was in front. Those houses was broke down already, everybody went out. That's why no more house over there. Every time they leave the place, they broke 'em down. I don't know why, but.

MM: But--okay. After you came back, you said that that was good time for you.

RB: Yeah, I came back, then after, I stayed home little while, but afterwards, I start work for the doctor.

MM: Which doctor? [William H.] Wilkinson?

RB: No. Before Wilkinson.

MM: Before Wilkinson. I don't know. Who was that?

RB: Dr. [Randolph L.] McCalla.

MM: McCalla.

RB: That was James Munro's wife's sister. That was the doctor's wife. The two sister. So she wen marry, the doctor wen bring the sister over here, then the sister wen get married to James Munro. That's what I understand, that one girl. But the girl not here. His wife from Kona. One girl, Ruth.

MM: So your children were school-age and they were going to school, and you were working?

RB: Yeah. I was working for the doctor until I got sick. Then I lay off little bit, but I went back work. My husband [Rustico Benenua] got sick, he had cancer.

MM: I see.

RB: The doctor said, "You know your husband has cancer? What you want to do, you want to quit work and stay home take care him?"

"Well, I talk to him first. He can walk around, but I had to make his food ready."

"Well you let me know if you cannot work so we can find somebody else."

"All right." So I said, "Well, if you pay me, I can work. As long I prepare the food for him." But only half day. One o'clock I pau work, come home. Then I can take care him because the two boys go school already.

MM: But when your husband first came, he used to work for Hawaiian Pine?

RB: No, he no like work here.

MM: Oh.

RB: He stayed home wash clothes for my mother and my father, take care.

MM: Oh, but, I thought he took care the mules one time.

RB: He did after. He stayed home until we move. Then when he wen begin to go work, we wen move down the [Lāna'i] City place and then he went to work. When he went to work, then I don't have to work. I work little bit--you know part-time, then I go back work for the doctor. Three kids they have, three babies. But then he pau over here, he went Mainland, he went back. When he went back, he died because he get hano, eh. And not only that, I think he get something else, because he cough, he drink plenty. So, when he

went, he died. So the wife came over here and stayed with James Munro up the ranch. And then she had a baby up there. She came back, she had big stomach. And she had one boy born. So she ask me to go back work. So I went back work, I was not working. I work hospital, but I no like work hospital, I scared. (MM chuckles.) That's when the hospital was over there.

MM: Yeah, the old one.

RB: Yeah. So I go back work for her. I work, when she born the baby, they all went back Mainland. So only the sister stay here with her daughter. She got one girl.

MM: You mentioned that after you folks came back, you used to go Keōmuku a lot?

RB: Yeah, I go with--because my husband no work, eh, he like go down. He go catch fish with Uncle Sammy [Kaopuiki] them. Uncle Sammy them was young yet.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

MM: And then you folks used to go down with the children?

RB: Yeah, with the two boys.

MM: For the weekend like that?

RB: No, we stay one week. Then we go home, up. Till afterwards, he tired, he like go work. So that's how he wen go work. He work for the mule team. He go drive the mule plow, that's the kind job he had. Bumbai, he get cancer, that's why he died.

MM: When you folks used to go Keōmuku [side], is that when you learned how to weave?

RB: No, I learn how to weave when I came home from Honolulu and we stayed down the house down there. And inside there, get plenty lau hala, in the old house. So my mother says plenty lau hala, you know. But she never mean to tell me I go make lau hala, but go weave. I said, eh, hard for weave lau hala, so Auntie Hannah [Kauila Richardson] and I was down there. Then she said, "Hard for weave?"

"No, if you like weave, you can. If you say you like weave but you no have that strong mind to weave then you no can. You like weave, you go ahead and sit down and learn to do." That's how they showed me and Auntie Hannah--us wen make.

She said, "When you finish your folks' hat, you folks wear till get more broke, you burn 'em."

"Why we have to burn? Throw 'em away."

"No, if you burn, you no forget how you make hat." I never heard, but we did that. We burn the hat. Bumbai us, till now, we still make hat. Aunty Hannah make hat, but she no make for anybody, you know. Only one she make is for Grace. She like wear my hat. How many I gotta make. I made one square kind. Now, she like puka hat. I no like make that kind hat, hard you know.

MM: I still have mine.

RB: Yeah. Plenty people have that kind hat. I give you one, then bumbai Halo had one, then somebody else had one. Pauline, you had, you take. She back on Moloka'i again, you know.

MM: I didn't know that.

RB: She was in Honolulu then they call 'em back. I think new boss took the Sheraton over there [Moloka'i]. That's why they look for who work over there, I think. They wen call Rosita first. Then bumbai call Pauline. That's all. The two of them was back, the old ones. She came over here, she wen sign her name for over here, you know. She came over here for one hearing they had.

END OF INTERVIEW

LĀNA'I RANCH

The People of Kō'ele and Keōmuku

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